



HOUSE NOTES

**The Latest News from the State Capitol
Louisiana House of Representatives
June 1, 2007**

The House this week tackled several key issues including the budget, revisions to the statewide building code, and ethics.

After nearly a day-long debate, the House sent to the Senate a \$29.6 billion dollar budget bill ([House Bill 1](#)), which is about \$100 million under the constitutionally mandated cap on spending. Leaving the House, the bill contained money for pay raises for teachers, support workers, firefighters, state troopers, and other state employees, full funding for higher education, an increase in money for education and health care, and about \$150 million in tax cuts. The bill did not contain any money for the Road Home Program which could face a deficit of as much as \$5 billion.

After passing the bill by a vote of 96-6, the House then quickly passed [House Bill 2](#), the state's \$6.5 billion construction budget.

[House Bill 3](#), the Omnibus Bond Authorization Act, did not fare as well. The bill, which provides funds for the state's construction projects, was eight votes shy of the required two-thirds vote. This bill will be brought back to the floor for another attempt at passage.

BUILDING CODE

* [House Bills 486 and 704](#) revise the statewide, mandatory building code using the International Residential Code that was passed during the 2005 First Extraordinary Session. Changes include the following:

- ◆ Current three year terms of council members would be eliminated with

members serving at the pleasure of the governor.

- ◆ All municipalities and parishes would use code enforcement officers or certified third-party providers contracted by the municipality, parish, or regional planning commission to enforce the codes.

- ◆ Further clarifies that nothing in this law shall conflict with the federal standards for manufactured housing construction or state law regarding manufactured housing installation.

- ◆ Homeowners building their own residence may use certified third-party providers for plans and inspections.

- ◆ Beginning Jan. 1, 2008, architects & engineers shall be granted certificates of registration as third-party providers for their specialty.

- ◆ Under present law, the council is required to adopt the latest edition of the International Residential Code (IRC), not including the administrative, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical parts. Proposed legislation removes the exclusion for electrical and mechanical parts.

- ◆ Enforcement of the IRC would only be mandatory with respect to new construction, reconstruction, additions to homes previously built to the code, and extensive alterations.

- ◆ Extensive alterations refers to an alteration when the total area of all the work areas included in the alteration

exceeds 50% of the area of the dwelling unit.

- ◆ Adopts the 2006 version of the IRC amended to include the 2003 design criteria. This version of the code will remain in effect until the 2009 edition of the code is published. At that time the council shall adopt that version of the code.
- ◆ Prohibits the council from adopting parts of the code that have been excluded by present law.

CRIME/SEX OFFENSES

* *House Bill 497 & 586* were heard by the Committee on the Administration of Criminal Justice and reported by substitute becoming *House Bill 969*.

This legislation creates the crime of prohibited sexual contact between an educator and a student when the victim is not the spouse of the offender and is a student at the school where the educator is assigned, employed or working at the time of the offense. Under the legislation, consent of a student 17 years of age or older or not knowing the student's age are not defenses.

Penalties include a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than six months, or both. Second or subsequent offenses carry a fine of not more than \$5,000 and imprisonment, with or without hard labor, for one to five years.

Violation of this law is a sex offense, but registration as a sex offender is not required if the victim is 17 or 18 years of age.

The legislation was unanimously approved by the committee and awaits action by the full House.

CITIZENS BOARD

* *House Bill 431* would make appointment changes to the makeup of the 15-member board of directors of the Louisiana Citizens Property Insurance Corporation.

The bill increases the number of appointments made by the governor from five

to six without any restriction placed on these selections.

Additionally, one member is to be appointed from a list of three nominees from the Property Casualty Insurers Association and one member is to be appointed from a list of three nominees from the largest domestic property insurer in the state.

The bill deletes the appointment from the La. Home Builders Association and replaces it with the American Insurance Association. The bill also deletes the appointment from the Society of La. Certified Public Accountants and replaces it with the largest domestic insurer in La.

The proposed law repeals present law that requires one member be appointed from a list of two nominees from the insurer with the largest direct written premium in the state of the subject lines of business.

Finally, the bill provides that any member who misses three consecutive meetings will be removed from the board.

House Bill 431 waits on consideration by the full House.

ETHICS AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

* *House Bill 730* would require all elected officials, including statewide and local elected officials, members of the legislature, appointed officials, and members of the Board of Ethics to file financial disclosure statements of income, compensation, and financial transactions of the official or the official's spouse.

The bill requires candidates for statewide elective office and the state legislature to file financial disclosure statements with the Board of Ethics at the time of qualifying.

The proposed law redefines "income" to include remuneration received under any verbal or written contract of employment; fees received for personal or professional services, less expenses paid to third parties; and the net income, prior to taxation, received with respect

to the sale or lease of immovable property, merchandise, or equipment.

The bill removes present law exclusions from "income" of legislative remuneration, spouse's salary from full-time employment or salary as an elected official, or any statewide public retirement system benefits.

"Business enterprise" is defined as a corporation, company, firm, partnership, limited liability company, sole proprietorship, not-for-profit organization, labor organization, nonpublic educational institution, or other legal entity.

Also, House Bill 730 requires all elected officials (other than legislators and statewide elected officials) to file disclosure reports containing the same information required of members of the legislature with the Board of Ethics on July 1 of each year.

The Board of Ethics would post a list of all members and elected officials who fail to file or timely file, or who have failed to disclose or accurately disclose any information required.

The proposed law makes present law \$500-per-day penalty applicable to all such persons.

House Bill 730 was approved by a vote of 88 to 13 and awaits consideration by the Senate.

FAILED TO PASS

* [House Bill 617](#) would have prohibited drilling in and around Lake Peigneur and the Jefferson Island salt dome except for directional drilling outside the two areas. Citizens who live in the area speculate that bubbles seen on the lake could be from a small, undetected leak in the storage caverns under the lake.

Opponents argued the bill could send a bad message to oil and gas companies who are thinking about doing business in Louisiana.

The legislation was deferred by the Natural Resources Committee.

* [House Bill 6](#), which would have changed the hours the polls are open on election day to 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. instead of 6 a.m. until 8 p.m., the hours they are currently open, failed to pass the House & Governmental Affairs Committee.